Europe's Ancient Nature Worshippers, The Pagans, Call for a Hindu Alliance
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# Europe's Ancient Nature Worshippers, The Pagans, Call for a Hindu Alliance

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As the Christian era slowly thaws, it's springtime for the indigenous faiths of the planet. A bubbly sort of euphoria has possessed the pre-Christian earth religions. They survived what to them has been a long winter. Today they meet and celebrate their rebirth, their roots and connections with each other and with Hinduism.

On November 24th, the 2nd Annual United Kingdom Pagan Federation convened at the University of London and proposed that Pagans not only become aware of the Pagan/Hindu overlap but take it another step establish a recognized alliance. Author and Pagan Nigel Pennick addressed the spirited group of 300 stressing that for Pagans not being Christian or Muslim was insufficient. Paganism is a tradition in itself - one for which he feels Hinduism constitutes its Eastern extension. Pennick foresees the possibility that Hindus may come to accept Europe's Pagans as a European branch of Hinduism. He pointed out that Hindus in Britain tend not to be persecuted by the Assemblies of God and other Christian extremists because it is assumed that they have an "ethnic right." He added that Pagans are assumed to be apostate Christians and it is considered permissible - since the Justinian Reforms - to hunt them down.

Pennick called for an alliance between Paganism and Hinduism. He cited discussions within Hinduism that all the Gods (Shiva, Ganesh, Kali, etc.) are part of the One and proposed that Paganism be absorbed into that discussion - especially with its Goddess-oriented sects. He added that Hinduism and Paganism have common roots - shamanic, ice-age, ecological, nature-worship, etc. and envisages that Paganism could become a part of the World Hindu Federation.

The meeting's setting was colorful. There were stalls marketing Pagan products from a range of different traditions. And everyone was glad the Fundamentalist Christian Coalition didn't disrupt the proceedings as they had done the year before.

Noted authoress Prudence Jones supported Nigel's proposal and further stressed that Paganism is very similar to Hinduism and Japan's nature-oriented Shinto religion as well.

The tack this bold idea now takes is uncharted, but Prudence and Nigel are not alone. Other indigenous faiths are also considering Hinduism as an ally as they reassert themselves in what some are calling a "Post-Christian era." Collectively, they feel Christianity buried them with a theology that masculinized God, separated man from Divinity and robbed the land of its sacredness. They promise the opposite: returning femininity to the Divine, seeing Divinity in all and treating the earth as a friend, not an enemy.

PAGAN (ism)

Paganus="rustic, peasant, heathen." HEATHEN, from Heath="forested or uncultivated land."

The term "Pagan" was coined by the early Christians to designate a non-Christian. The Mediterranean peoples at that time followed a lifestyle and thinking very Hindu-like. Temples to Gods and Goddesses were many. Religious festivals filled the year based on an agrarian calendar. Mystery schools taught the metaphysics of healing, yogic disciplines and the belief that all life is sacred and interconnected.

According to the U.K. Pagan Federation, there are roughly 20,000 Pagans in Britain and 200,000 in Europe who call themselves Pagans, but possibly several million more - especially in rural life - who subscribe to Pagan thought.

Pagan/Hindu

SIMILARITIES BELIEF IN:

* EXISTENCE OF MYRIADS OF NON-PHYSICAL BEINGS FROM NATURES-SPIRITS TO DEITIES

* KARMA AND REINCARNATION

* THE ONENESS OF ALL CREATION PERVADED BY THE DIVINE FORCE

* NO DOGMA: FINAL SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY IS PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF TRUTH

* THE DIVINE IS FEMININE AND MASCULINE

* DECENTRALIZED ORGANIZATION

* CHAKRAS, KUNDALINI, PRANIC ENERGY

* INNER, NON-PHYSICAL REALMS

* USE OF CEREMONIAL WORSHIP TO INVOKE AND AWAKEN HIGHER SPIRITUAL ENERGIES

DIFFERENCES:

* TRADITIONS: HINDUISM IS INDIAN; PAGANISM IS GRECO/ROMAN/CELTIC

* DEITIES: HINDU: SIVA, VISHNU, SHAKTI, ETC: PAGAN: COVENTINA, BRIDGE, ETC.

* TEMPLES: HINDU: WORSHIP IS VERY RITUALIZED; PAGAN WORSHIP IS LESS RIGID

* SCRIPTURES: HINDUS REVERE ESTABLISHED TEXTS; PAGANS FOLLOW DIVERSE, INSPIRED WRITINGS

"YES, Hindus are Pagans"

INTERVIEW WITH PRUDENCE JONES

HINDUISM TODAY: How do you envision Paganism allying with Hinduism?

Prudence Jones: To start, through conferences we could see our connections. The most important connection between Paganism, Hinduism and Shintoism is they are not limited to a holy book like Islam and Christianity. Not dogmatic. All the indigenous faiths must talk to one another. They all obviously wouldn't [merge] because of differences of tradition, history customs, etc. But they must link because the legal system today has defined religion based on monotheism - with a Supreme Deity who has to be obeyed. I wouldn't want to make anything too formal yet, because we don't know each other. Perhaps what we need is a Worldwide Council of Indigenous Religions.

HT: Then you consider both Hinduism and Shintoism to be Pagan?

PJ: Yes. Basically, we want to show people how similar our faith is with Hinduism and Shintoism and the North American tradition. We have to stand up against this world decade of Christian evangelism - 19912,000 - out to convert everybody of an indigenous faith. Also for legal reasons, it might be useful to be able to say we are affiliated with a world Hindu organization. But we don't really want to become part of or join another religion, but rather affiliate. One reason - although we vastly appreciate the similarities - is that we don't want the weight of social history that both Hinduism or Shintoism have. [We are enjoying] a new spiritual current and don't want to get tied down with traditions of 'Who is Brahman?' and who's allowed in the temple on which days.

HT: What are the main Pagan beliefs?

Prudence Jones: European Pagan religion is the native, indigenous religion of Europe. Religions with doctrines, like Christianity, came later. We feel all the world's native religions have three features in common: One, they are all nature-venerating, seeing nature as a manifestation of Divinity. The second is their polytheistic approach - many Deities, many manifestations of the Divine. The third feature is they all recognize the Goddess, the female aspect of Divinity, as well as the male.

HT: What about karma and reincarnation?

PJ: Yes, not all Pagans, but most. We have no central authority that dictates what we have to believe because it has to do with experience of the divine, and forms in which you describe that experience will vary.

Produce Jones is a spokesperson for the U.K. Pagan Federation. Her address: 21 Shelly Garden, Cambridge, U.K. CB30BT.

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